

## **Celeste Jackson**

### **Brains, Heart, Faith**

Celeste Jackson is the daughter of the late Dr. William and Gladys Jackson and the granddaughter of Mother Anna Levy. Her family has been an important part of the Israelite community since their days with Chief Rabbi W.A. Matthew. In May of 2010, Celeste graduated with honors from Duke University with a B.A. in Political Science. She received the prestigious Duke University Mary McLeod Bethune Award for Writing. She currently works for a law firm in New York City called Cravath Swaine & Moore LLP. And, if Celeste hasn't soared high enough yet, she is studying to get a private pilot's license.

Judaism has always been an important part of her life and it will remain so. In addition to her other accolades, Celeste received the Dorot Fellowship to study for a year in Israel. The stated goal of the Dorot Fellowship is to "enliven the American Jewish landscape by seeding the community with a cadre of outstanding young lay leaders who will create new forms, and reinvigorate existing forms, of Jewish expression." With her background and engaging spirit Celeste will certainly have a lot to contribute to the future of Judaism.

After her parents died, her grandmother, Mother Anna Levy (see article about [Mother Anna](#)) helped to keep the children connected to the Israelite community as they pursued their educations. Though they lived in Pennsylvania, the Jackson family would return to New York for High Holy Holidays and other special occasions. It seems that in the blink of an eye the little girl we would see at the river on Rosh Hashanah, singing at the Hanukkah party, or sitting around the seder table at Passover has blossomed into a very lovely and intelligent woman. With each success she makes us proud.

When I asked Celeste about her future plans, she said that when she returns from Israel she wants to pursue a joint law degree and Ph.D. And, when I inquired about the role that her Black-Jewish identity would play in her life she wrote the following:

*"I am on a journey that challenges me to understand, develop and engage my Jewish identity as a pivotal part of my self-actualization process. To me, being Jewish encapsulates more than a seemingly irreconcilable conflict in the Middle East, attending shul, or even keeping kosher. Rather, being Jewish is about recognizing that we, as a people, have always been challenged, our spirit broken and our faith tested but we have never given up. It is within this reality that I have developed my identity as a strong, black and Jewish woman. This identity has invaluable contributed to my academic and personal successes."*

Mazel Tov Celeste

